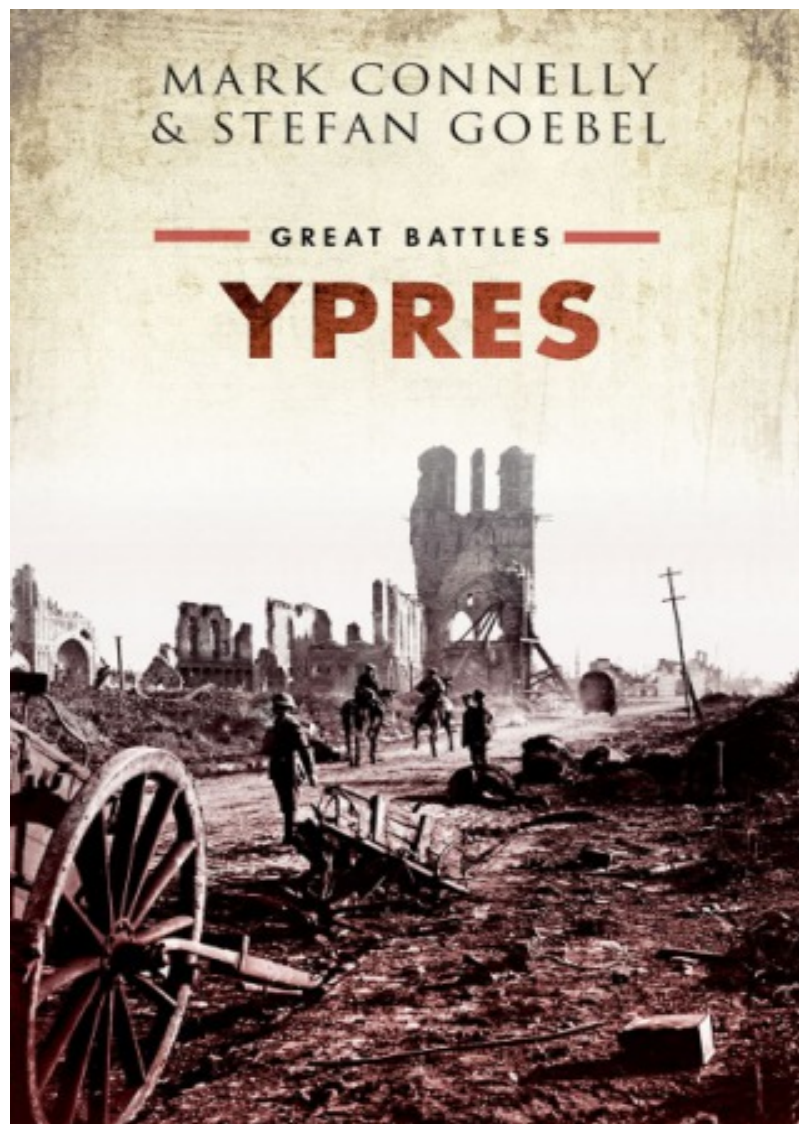


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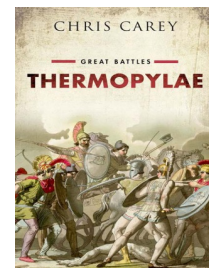


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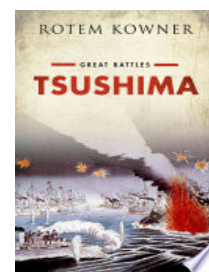
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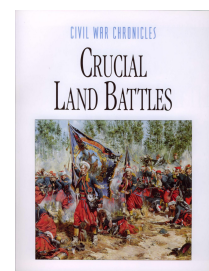
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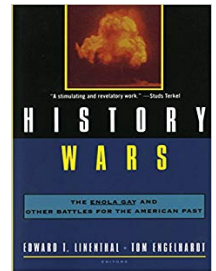
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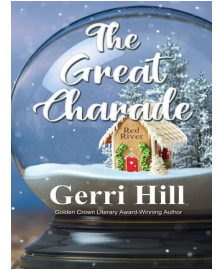
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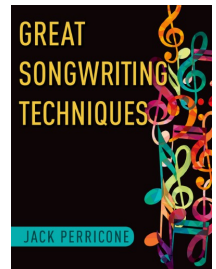
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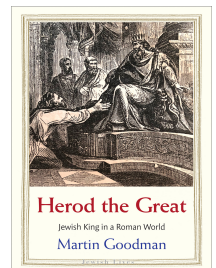
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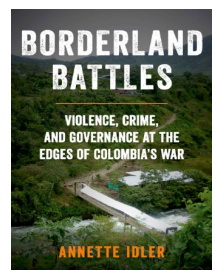
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MARK CONNELLY
& STEFAN GOEBEL

— GREAT BATTLES —

YPRES



YPRES

GREAT BATTLES

YPRES

MARK CONNELLY
AND
STEFAN GOEBEL

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FOREWORD

For those who practise war in the twenty-first century the idea of a 'great battle' can seem no more than the echo of a remote past. The names on regimental colours or the events commemorated at mess dinners bear little relationship to patrolling in dusty villages or waging 'wars amongst the people'. Contemporary military doctrine downplays the idea of victory, arguing that wars end by negotiation not by the smashing of an enemy army or navy. Indeed it erodes the very division between war and peace, and with it the aspiration to fight a culminating 'great battle'.

And yet to take battle out of war is to redefine war, possibly to the point where some would argue that it ceases to be war. Carl von Clausewitz, who experienced two 'great battles' at first hand—Jena in 1806 and Borodino in 1812—wrote in *On War* that major battle is 'concentrated war', and 'the centre of gravity of the entire campaign'. Clausewitz's remarks related to the theory of strategy. He recognized that in practice armies might avoid battles, but even then the efficacy of their actions relied on the latent threat of fighting. Winston Churchill saw the importance of battles in different terms, not for their place within war but for their impact on historical and national narratives. His forebear, the Duke of Marlborough, commanded in four major battles and named his palace after the most famous of them, Blenheim, fought in 1704. Battles, Churchill wrote in his biography of Marlborough, are 'the principal milestones in secular history'. For him 'Great battles, won or lost, change the entire course of events, create new standards of values, new moods, new atmospheres, in armies and nations, to which all must conform'.

Clausewitz's experience of war was shaped by Napoleon. Like Marlborough, the French emperor sought to bring his enemies to battle. However, each lived within a century of the other, and they fought their wars in the same continent and even on occasion on adjacent ground. Winston Churchill's own experience of war, which spanned the late nineteenth-century colonial conflicts of the British Empire as well as two world wars, became increasingly distanced from the sorts of battle he and Clausewitz described. In 1898 Churchill rode in a cavalry charge in a battle which crushed the Madhist forces of the Sudan in a single day. Four years later the British commander at Omdurman, Lord Kitchener, brought the South African War to a conclusion after a two-year guerrilla conflict in which no climactic battle occurred. Both Churchill and Kitchener served as British Cabinet ministers in the First World War, a conflict in which battles lasted weeks, and even months, and which, despite their scale and duration, did not produce clear-cut outcomes. The 'Battle' of Verdun ran for all but one month of 1916 and that of the Somme for five months. The potentially decisive naval action at Jutland spanned a more traditional twenty-four-hour timetable but was not conclusive and was not replicated during the war. In the Second World War, the major struggle in waters adjacent to Europe, the 'Battle' of the Atlantic, was fought from 1940 to early 1944.

Clausewitz would have called these twentieth-century 'battles' campaigns, or even seen them as wars in their own right. The determination to seek battle and to venerate its effects may therefore be culturally determined, the product of time and place, rather than an inherent attribute of war. The ancient historian Victor Davis Hanson has argued that seeking battle is a 'western way of war' derived from classical Greece. Seemingly supportive of his argument are the writings of Sun Tzu, who flourished in warring states in China between two and five centuries before the birth of Christ, and who pointed out that the most effective way of waging war was to avoid the risks and dangers of actual fighting. Hanson has provoked strong criticism: those who argue that wars can be won without battles are not only

to be found in Asia. Eighteenth-century European commanders, deploying armies in close-order formations in order to deliver concentrated fires, realized that the destructive consequences of battle for their own troops could be self-defeating. After the First World War, Basil Liddell Hart developed a theory of strategy which he called 'the indirect approach', and suggested that manoeuvre might substitute for hard fighting, even if its success still relied on the inherent threat of battle.

The winners of battles have been celebrated as heroes, and nations have used their triumphs to establish their founding myths. It is precisely for these reasons that their legacies have outlived their direct political consequences. Commemorated in painting, verse, and music, marked by monumental memorials, and used as the way points for the periodization of history, they have enjoyed cultural afterlives. These are evident in many capitals, in place names and statues, not least in Paris and London. The French tourist who finds himself in a London taxi travelling from Trafalgar Square to Waterloo Station should reflect on his or her own domestic peregrinations from the Rue de Rivoli to the Gare d'Austerlitz. Today's Mongolia venerates the memory of Genghis Khan while Greece and Macedonia scrap over the rights to Alexander the Great.

This series of books on 'great battles' tips its hat to both Clausewitz and Churchill. Each of its volumes situates the battle which it discusses in the context of the war in which it occurred, but each then goes on to discuss its legacy, its historical interpretation and reinterpretation, its place in national memory and commemoration, and its manifestations in art and culture. These are not easy books to write. The victors were more often celebrated than the defeated; the effect of loss on the battlefield could be cultural oblivion. However, that point is not universally true: the British have done more over time to mark their defeats at Gallipoli in 1915 and Dunkirk in 1940 than their conquerors on both occasions. For the history of war to thrive and be productive it needs to embrace the view from 'the other side of the hill', to use the Duke of Wellington's words. The battle the British call Omdurman is

for the Sudanese the Battle of Kerreri; the Germans called Waterloo 'la Belle Alliance' and Jutland Skagerrak. Indeed the naming of battles could itself be a sign not only of geographical precision or imprecision (Kerreri is more accurate but as a hill rather than a town is harder to find on a small-scale map), but also of cultural choice. In 1914 the German general staff opted to name their defeat of the Russians in East Prussia not Allenstein (as geography suggested) but Tannenberg, in order to claim revenge for the defeat of the Teutonic Knights in 1410.

Military history, more than many other forms of history, is bound up with national stories. All too frequently it fails to be comparative, to recognize that war is a 'clash of wills' (to quote Clausewitz once more), and so omits to address both parties to the fight. Cultural difference and, even more, linguistic ignorance can prevent the historian considering a battle in the round; so too can the availability of sources. Levels of literacy matter here, but so does cultural survival. Often these pressures can be congruent but they can also be divergent. Britain enjoys much higher levels of literacy than Afghanistan, but in 2002 the memory of the two countries' three wars flourished in the latter, thanks to an oral tradition, much more robustly than in the former, for whom literacy had created distance. And the historian who addresses cultural legacy is likely to face a much more challenging task the further in the past the battle occurred. The opportunity for invention and reinvention is simply greater the longer the lapse of time since the key event.

All historians of war must, nonetheless, never forget that, however rich and splendid the cultural legacy of a great battle, it was won and lost by fighting, by killing and being killed. The Battle of Waterloo has left as abundant a footprint as any, but the general who harvested most of its glory reflected on it in terms which have general applicability, and carry across time in their capacity to capture a universal truth. Wellington wrote to Lady Shelley in its immediate aftermath: 'I hope to God I have fought my last battle. It is a bad thing to be always fighting. While in the thick of it I am much too occupied to feel anything; but it is wretched just after. It is quite impossible to think of

FOREWORD

glory. Both mind and feelings are exhausted. I am wretched even at the moment of victory, and I always say that, next to a battle lost, the greatest misery is a battle gained.' Readers of this series should never forget the immediate suffering caused by battle, as well as the courage required to engage in it: the physical courage of the soldier, sailor, or warrior, and the moral courage of the commander, ready to hazard all on its uncertain outcomes.

HEW STRACHAN

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PREFACE

In August 1914 Ypres was a sleepy Belgian city admired by many for its remarkable Gothic architecture. By that point it was already a palimpsest on which writers and artists had inscribed their own messages and meanings. A few months later the armies arrived, and the destruction of its fabric commenced. At the same time, each combatant nation present in and around the city began to construct its own particular definition of the meaning of the place. Many sites along the Western Front achieved greatness, or notoriety, between 1914 and 1918, but in no other place did the combatants overlap each other so closely and thus no other place gathered such a disparate range of competing visions. Interpretations of Ypres, its landscape and its hinterland, by Belgium, Britain and its Empire, France, and Germany soon developed a rich vocabulary of symbolism and iconography. In fact, the battle for the spiritual meaning of Ypres was every bit as intense and vigorous as the fighting at the front, and started a public discourse that has continued ever since that First Battle.

This book is the first truly transnational interpretation of the meaning of Ypres and, by extension, the Western Front, placing competing visions of its meaning and significance side by side throughout. Transnational approaches to the First and Second World Wars have proliferated over the last two decades, but this laudable trend has often resulted in studies which still compartmentalize differing national standpoints in discrete chapters or sections. Although much of this comparative work is of excellent quality and provides many valuable insights through its multinational approach, it falls short of full integration. In this study we have deliberately juxtaposed the variations and nuances of interpretation created by different national

perspectives continually.¹ This is not something a lone scholar could accomplish. The research for this book itself has been a project in transnational history: all chapters in this 'duo-graph' are the result of collaboration between a British and a German historian.

A highly important practical, historical problem was a major driver of this transnational, multivocal approach: determining what each combatant nation defined, or perhaps more properly failed to define, as its Ypres front, sector, or salient revealed the extreme haziness of terms. Often used interchangeably with the equally hazy term of 'Flanders', Ypres as an imagined geography differed from nation to nation. For the French, after the First Battle in 1914, Ypres was a component of a front running from Dixmude in the north through Steenstraat down to about Pilckem. For the Belgians, to whom the city meant so much, Ypres was part of the last line of national defence, in which its army held the northernmost sector from Dixmude to the coast. The Germans often used the term *Flandern* to mean the whole sector from the Franco-Belgian border to the sea, but it was also used to describe the line running from the salient itself northwards to the sea. Britain and its imperial contingents were equally idiosyncratic in definitions. Depending on context, 'Flanders' meant either the entire line in Belgium, or a sector running from Ploegsteert–Le Gheer at the border to roughly Pilckem. This geographical categorization could also be labelled 'Ypres', whereas 'the salient' was the line arcing out from roughly Saint-Éloi in the south through a central apex around Hooze before bending back to a hinge point in the Pilckem–Boesinghe district. The thick Flanders fog enveloping the 'naming of parts', to use Henry Reed's poetry from the later world war, resulted in the disaggregation of histories, visions, and interpretations, and made assignment of a simple geographical definition of Ypres impossible.² At one and the same time, it made an exploration of the meaning of Ypres much more complicated and much more interesting. Ypres proved bigger than we had imagined at the start of the research.

In considering the geography, the global perspective came into play. Over recent years much First World War historiography has,

quite rightly, emphasized the way in which the war stretched beyond Europe, affecting people across the globe. Moving to centre stage what were once conceived as histories subordinate to the truly important narratives has provided a valuable corrective, and has considerably deepened understandings of the conflict.³ Here, the focus is very much back on the Western Front, and a very small section of that front. However, it shares the vision of the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ieper (Ypres), encapsulated in its 2008 exhibition and accompanying book, *Five Continents in Flanders*.⁴ The world came to Ypres between 1914 and 1918, and many people from across the globe have been coming ever since.

Elasticity of place and space was driven by two elements. First, there is the question of the sheer number of battles around Ypres. Technically, there were five great engagements, which makes Ypres very different to other major battlefields such as the Somme, which was fought over in 1916, had a brief flurry of activity in the spring of 1918, and then—in its southern section—became a focal point for an equally brief period in the summer of 1918. Ypres and the region around it was fought for, and over, in every year of the war, making it a spreading, molten slick of violence. Secondly, the elasticity was driven by the practical realities of commemoration and remembrance, which are a very important part of this study. A man could be killed and buried in one place, but be exhumed and reburied somewhere quite different. Alternatively, if his body was lost, he might be formally commemorated on a memorial a long way from where he actually met his death. Such factors influenced the way veterans and bereaved interpreted the spaces and visited and revisited them after the war. This has made the ‘spatial turn’—meaning an understanding of the way space is socially constructed and reconstructed, used and reused—an implicit approach in this book.⁵ Building on the ideas and research of Pierre Nora, concepts of memory inscription and reinscription on places—and occasionally things (although a full cultural history of the material culture relating to Ypres requires a book-length study in its own right)—are important because

they take the study away from too narrow a focus on memorials and cemeteries.⁶

In this study the emphasis has been on producing a ‘media’ history, or perhaps ‘mediation’ history is a better term. By that, we mean a study of many different types of evidence from official documents through books and journals to photographs, films, and music with the intention of revealing that remembrance of the Great War stretched way beyond formal commemorative activity. It also reveals that the ‘war touch’, to use Michael Williams’s highly useful and insightful phrase, could be discerned across cultural expressions, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s.⁷ As our study shows, this ‘touch’ meant that although Ypres may have been reified, it existed in a number of different registers in popular culture and was quotidian as well as ethereal. Ypres was the home of the Menin Gate memorial *and* provided the name for a greyhound, ‘Ypres Mist’, as well as a West London garage, just as Langemarck was a ‘sacred site’ *and* the name of streets and bus stops across Germany.

Realizing this quotidian aspect also made clear the multivocal element of the memory of Ypres: many tried to ‘own’ Ypres outright and some were more successful than others at putting their own stamp on the place—notably the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC)—but it was no one’s sole possession. The sheer breadth of meanings and interpretations reveals much about agency and authority over Ypres. Vast numbers of individuals and groups felt that they had a special claim over Ypres (indeed this can still be detected today). This created a situation in which groups and people jostled for space and influence, working hard to enlist others in their cause and to gain the right to act as spokesperson for that cause. Some groupings proved influential over a considerable span, others had gadfly-like existences, but the crucial thing was their common agreement that Ypres was special and needed remembering and commemorating. What precisely needed remembering and commemorating was, of course, a matter keenly contested.⁸ Historiographically, this is significant for its complicating of the story. Much of the literature on

Germany's relationship with Ypres and Flanders has focused on the right wing's domination of war memory.⁹ But our research led us to the conclusion that war commemoration was not simply a rehearsal for fascism in Germany. And even when the Nazis appropriated Langemarck they often contradicted themselves. There is not a simple German metanarrative as some historians have suggested.¹⁰ By the same token, the work of the IWGC may have lauded the efforts of the British Empire, but for men like Sir Fabian Ware, its vice chairman and guiding light, the Menin Gate could also be a site of reconciliation for the veterans of the opposing armies. Much of the literature on commemoration is, naturally enough, centred on the key expressions of corporate remembrance and individual memory in the form of studies of war memorials. Moreover, the vast majority of this literature concentrates on memorials erected on the home front and how people sought to deal with mass death a long way from the fighting zone.¹¹ Here, the focus is on the fields of battle and the extent to which public attention remained fixated on the sites of combat.

However, the memorial landscape of Ypres was much more than the consciously-constructed. Indeed, the chain of events and causality need to be emphasized: a place has things built on it because the place itself is deemed significant. This may sound an extremely obvious point, but it needs to be stated nonetheless. Ypres, and its hinterland, is a landscape saturated with discrete locations which have been invested with special significance. This makes Ypres a world of 'micro-geographies' and circuits of remembrance criss-crossed with ley lines, of which some remain easily traceable in the landscape, some have disappeared, while others are emerging as new interests and preoccupations enter the scene of public and private commemoration.¹²

As many historians and commentators on commemoration and memory have noted, seemingly well-established traditions and modes of expression are in fact constantly being reoriented and reworked. By the same token, much of the literature on First World War commemoration adopts relatively narrow time frames and inserts convenient and justifiable start and stop dates with 1919–39 a very common period

of study. Thanks to the ability to concentrate on a particular aspect and site, we have had the opportunity to cover a much broader chronological sweep including the 'prehistory' of Ypres, which needs to be explored if its subsequent reification is to be fully understood. At the same time, the research revealed to us that in the case of Ypres the footprint of the First World War can be detected in the second global conflict. The imagined Ypres loomed large especially in 1940 and 1944. There was no forgetting in the Second World War; rather Ypres was incorporated into a new (hi)story.

Investigating this richly detailed Flemish tapestry of a history has required a great deal of research in an extensive range of archives. Material has been accessed from the state archives of Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, and New Zealand; local and regional archives have been explored across the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, in Belgium and Germany, as well as museum archives and collections in Britain and Belgium, and we are particularly grateful to the assistance we have received from the staff of the In Flanders Fields Museum. Yet the spatial turn requires historians to rethink and enhance their research methods. Thus, in addition to classical historical research in archives and libraries, we have undertaken fieldwork in and around Ypres, walking the former battlefields and visiting the war cemeteries. All this helped us to understand the fascinating history of Ypres and its looming presence in the remembrance of the Great War.

Note on Place Names

The spelling of place names has altered greatly over the years. As a general rule, we have used the common spellings in each time period and the modern Dutch/Flemish only where semantics became important to the debate over the meaning and ownership of war memories and commemorative practices.

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This book is an exercise in comparative and transnational history, and a product of collective research. All chapters in this book were jointly written by the authors.

MARK CONNELLY and STEFAN GOEBEL

Canterbury, October 2017

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CHAPTER I.

A WAY OUT OF THE DIFFICULTY.

Two hours after the receipt of Mrs. McDermott's second letter, Squire Culpepper was on his way to Sugden's bank. His heart was heavy, and his step slow. He had never had to borrow a farthing from any man—at least, never since he had come into the estate—and he felt the humiliation, as he himself called it, very bitterly. There was something of bitterness, too, in having to confess to his friend Cope how all his brilliant castles in the air had vanished utterly, leaving not a wrack behind.

He could see, in imagination, the sneer that would creep over Cope's face as the latter asked him why he could not obtain a mortgage on his fine new mansion at Pincote; the mansion he had talked so much about—about which he had bored his friends; the mansion that was to have been built out of the Alcazar shares, but of which not even the foundation-stone would ever now be laid. Then, again, the Squire was far from certain as to the kind of reception which would be accorded him by the banker. Of late he had seemed cool, very cool—refrigerating almost. Once or twice, too, when he had called, Mr. Cope had been invisible: a Jupiter Tonans buried for the time being among a cloud of ledgers and dockets and transfers: not to be seen by any one save his own immediate satellites. The time had been, and not so very long ago, when he could walk unchallenged through the outer bank office, whoever else might be waiting, and so into the inner sanctum, and be sure of a welcome when he got there. But now he was sure to be intercepted by one or other of the clerks with a "Will you please to take a seat for a moment while I see whether Mr. Cope is

disengaged." The Squire groaned with inward rage as, leaning on his thick stick, he limped down Duxley High Street and thought of all these things.

As he had surmised it would be, so it was on the present occasion. He had to sit down in the outer office, one of a row of six who were waiting Mr. Cope's time and pleasure to see them. "He won't lend me the money," said the Squire to himself, as he sat there choking with secret mortification. "He'll find some paltry excuse for refusing me. It's almost worth a man's while to tumble into trouble just to find out who are his friends and who are not."

However, the banker did not keep him waiting more than five or six minutes. "Mr. Cope will see you, sir," said a liveried messenger, who came up to him with a low bow; and into Mr. Cope's parlour the Squire was thereupon ushered.

The two men met with a certain amount of restraint on either side. They shook hands as a matter of course, and made a few remarks about the weather; and then the banker began to play with his seals, and waited in bland silence to hear whatever the Squire might have to say to him.

Mr. Culpepper fidgeted in his chair and cleared his throat. The crucial moment was come at last. "I'm in a bit of a difficulty, Cope," he began, "and I've come to you, as one of the oldest friends I have, to see whether you can help me out of it."

"I should have thought that Mr. Culpepper was one of the last people in the world to be troubled with difficulties of any kind," said the banker, in a tone of studied coldness.

"Which shows how little you know about either Mr. Culpepper or his affairs," said the Squire, dryly.

The banker coughed dubiously. "In what way can I be of service to you?" he said.

"I want five thousand five hundred pounds by this day week, and I've come to you to help me to raise it."

"In other words, you want to borrow five thousand five hundred pounds?"

"Exactly so."

"And what kind of security are you prepared to offer for a loan of such magnitude?"

"What security! Why, my I.O.U., of course."

Mr. Cope took a pinch of snuff slowly and deliberately before he spoke again. "I am afraid the document in question could hardly be looked upon as a negotiable security."

"And who the deuce wanted it to be considered as a negotiable security?" burst out the Squire. "Do you think I want everybody to know my private affairs?"

"Possibly not," said the banker, quietly. "But, in transactions of this nature, it is a matter of simple business that the person who advances the money should have some equivalent security in return."

"And is not my I.O.U. a good and equivalent security as between friend and friend?"

"Oh if you are going to put the case in that way, it becomes a different kind of transaction entirely," said the banker.

"And how else did you think I was going to put the case, as you call it?" asked the Squire, indignantly.

"Commercially, of course: as a pure matter of business between one man and another."

"Oh, ho that's it, is it?" said the Squire, grimly.

"That's just it, Mr. Culpepper."

"Then friendship in such a case as this counts for nothing, and my I.O.U. might just as well never be written."

"Let us be candid with each other," said the banker, blandly. "You want the loan of a very considerable sum of money. Now, however much inclined I might be to lend you the amount out of my own private coffers, you will believe me when I say that I am not in a position to do so. I have no such amount of available capital in hand at present. But if you were to come to me with a good negotiable security, I could at once put you into the proper channel for

obtaining what you want. A mortgage, for instance. What could be better than that? The estate, so far as I know, is unencumbered, and the sum you need could easily be raised on it on very easy terms."

"I took an oath to my father on his deathbed that I would never raise a penny by mortgage on Pincote, and I never will."

"If that is the case," said the banker, with a slight shrug of the shoulders, "I am afraid that I hardly see in what way I can be of service to you." He coughed, and then he looked at his watch, an action which Mr. Culpepper did not fail to note and resent in his own mind.

"I am sorry I came," he said, bitterly. "It seems to have been only a waste of your time and mine."

"Don't speak of it," said the banker, with his little business laugh. "In any case, you have learned one of the first and simplest lessons of commercial ethics."

"I have, indeed," answered the Squire, with a sigh. He rose to go.

"And Miss Culpepper, is she quite well?" said Mr. Cope; rising also. "I have not had the pleasure of seeing her for some little time."

The Squire faced fiercely round. "Look you here, Horatio Cope," he said; "you and I have been friends of many years' standing. Fast friends, I thought, whom no reverses of fortune would have separated. Finding myself in a little strait, I come to you for assistance. To whom else should I apply? It is idle to say that you could not help me out of my difficulty, were you willing to do so."

"No, believe me——" interrupted the banker; but Mr. Culpepper went on without deigning to notice the interruption.

"You have not chosen to do so, and there's an end of the matter, so far. Our friendship must cease from this day. You will not be sorry that it is so. The insults and slights you have put upon me of late have all had that end in view, and you are doubtless grateful that they have had the desired effect."

"You judge me very hardly," said the banker.

"I judge you from your own actions, and from them alone," said the Squire, sternly. "Another point, and I have done. Your son was engaged to my daughter, with your full sanction and consent. That engagement, too, must come to an end."

"With all my heart," said the banker, quietly.

"For some time past your son, acting, no doubt, on instructions from his father, has been gradually paving the way for something of this kind. There have been no letters from him for five weeks, and the last three or four that he sent were not more than as many lines each. No doubt he will feel grateful at being released from an engagement that had become odious to him; and on Miss Culpepper's side the release will be an equally happy one. She had learned long ago to estimate at his true value the man to whom she had so rashly pledged her hand. She had found out, to her bitter cost, that she had promised herself to a person who had neither the instincts nor the education of a gentleman—to an individual, in fact, who was little better than a common boor."

This last thrust touched the banker to the quick. His face flushed deeply. He crossed the room and called down an India-rubber tube: "What is the amount of Mr. Culpepper's balance?"

Presently came the answer: "Two eighty eleven five."

"Two hundred and eighty pounds, eleven shillings, and five pence," said Mr. Cope, with a sneer. "May I ask, sir, that you will take immediate steps for having this magnificent balance transferred to some other establishment."

"I shall take my own time about doing that," said Mr. Culpepper.

"What a pity that your new mansion was not finished in time—quite a castle it was to have been, was it not? A mortgage of five or six thousand could have been a matter of no difficulty then, you know. If I recollect rightly, all the furniture and decorations were to have come from London. Nothing in Duxley would have been good enough. I merely echo your own words."

The Squire winced. "I am rightly served," he muttered to himself. "What can one expect from a man who swept out an office and

cleaned his master's shoes?" He rose to go. For all his bitterness, there was a little pathetic feeling at work in his heart. "So ends a friendship of twenty years," was his thought. "Goodbye, Cope," he said aloud as he moved towards the door.

The banker, standing with his back to the fire, and looking straight at the opposite wall, neither stirred nor spoke, nor so much as turned his head to take a last look at his old friend. And so, without another word, the Squire passed out.

A bleak north wind was blowing as the Squire stepped into the street. He paused for a moment to button his coat more closely around him. As he did so, a poor ragged wretch passed trembling by without saying a word. The Squire called the man back and gave him a shilling. "My plight may be bad enough, but his is a thousand times worse," he said to himself as he walked down the street.

Where to go, or what to do next, he did not know. He had gone to see Mr. Cope without any very great expectation of being able to obtain what he wanted, and yet, perhaps, not without some faint hope nestling at his heart that his friend would find him the money. But now he knew for a fact that nothing was to be got from that quarter, he felt a little chilled, a little lonely, a little lost as to what he should do next. That something must be done, he knew quite well, but he was at a nonplus as to what that something ought to be. To raise five thousand five hundred pounds at a few days' notice, with no better security to offer than a simple I.O.U., was by no means an easy matter, as the Squire was beginning to discover to his cost. "Why not ask Sir Harry Cripps?" he said to himself. But then he bethought himself that Sir Harry had a very expensive family, and that only six months ago he had given up his hunter, and dispensed with a couple of carriage-horses, and had talked of going on to the continent for four or five years. No: it was evident that Sir Harry Cripps could do nothing for him.

In what other direction to turn he knew not. "If poor Lionel Dering had only been alive, I could have gone to him with confidence," he thought. "Why not try Kester St. George?" was his next thought. "No: Kester isn't one of the lending kind," he muttered, with a shake

of the head. "He's uncommonly close-fisted, is Kester. What he's got he'll stick to. No use trying there."

Next moment he nearly ran against General St. George, who was coming from an opposite direction. They started at sight of each other, then shook hands cordially. Their acquaintanceship dated only from the arrival of the General at Park Newton, but they had already learned to like and esteem one another.

After the customary greetings and inquiries were over, said Mr. Culpepper to the General: "Is your nephew Kester still stopping with you at Park Newton?"

"Yes, he is still there," answered the General; "though he has talked every day for the last month or more about going. Kester is one of those unaccountable fellows that you can never depend on. He may stay for another month, or he may take it into his head to go by the first train to-morrow."

"I heard a little while ago that he was ill; but I suppose he is better again by this time?"

"Yes—quite recovered. He was laid up for three or four days, but he soon got all right again."

"Your other nephew—George—Tom—Harry—what's his name—is he quite well?"

"You mean Richard—he who came from India? Yes, he is quite well."

"He's very like his poor brother, only darker, and—pardon me for saying so—not half so agreeable a young fellow."

"Everybody seems to have liked poor Lionel."

"Nobody could help liking him," said the Squire, with energy. "I felt the loss of that poor boy almost as much as if he had been my own son."

"Not a soul in the world had an ill word to say about him."

"I wish that the same could be said of all of us," said the Squire. And so, after a few more words, they parted.

As General St. George had told the Squire, Kester was still at Park Newton. The doctor who was called in to attend him after his sudden attack on the night that the footsteps were heard in the nailed-up room, prescribed a bottle or two of some harmless mixture, and a few days of complete rest and isolation. As Kester would neither allow himself to be examined, nor answer any questions, there was very little more that could be done for him.

Kester's first impulse after his recovery—and a very strong impulse it was—was to quit Park Newton at once and for ever. Further reflection, however, convinced him that such a step would be unwise in the extreme. It would at once be said that he had been frightened away by the ghost, and that was a thing that he could by no means afford to have said of him. For it to get gossiped about that he had been driven from his own house by the ghost of Percy Osmond, might, in time, tend to breed suspicion; and from suspicion might spring inquiry, and that might ultimately lead to nobody knew what. No: he would stay on at Park Newton for weeks—for months even, if it suited him to do so. The incident of his sudden illness was a very untoward one: on that point there could be no doubt whatever; but not if he could anyhow help it should the faintest breath of suspicion spring therefrom.

The Squire's troubles had faded into the background for a few minutes during his interview with General St. George, but they now rushed back upon him with, as it seemed, tenfold force. There was nothing left for him now but to go home, and yet he had never felt less inclined to do so in his life. He dreaded the long quiet evening, with no society but that of his daughter. Not that Jane was a dull companion, or anything like it; but he dreaded to encounter her pleading eyes, her pretty caressing ways, the lingering embrace she would give him when he entered the house, and her good-night kiss. He felt how all these things would tend to unman him, how they would merely serve to deepen the remorse which he felt already. If only he could meet with some one to take home with him!—he did not care much who it was—some one who would talk to him, and enliven the evening, and take off for a little while the edge of his

trouble, and so help him to tide over the weary hours that intervened between now and the morrow, by which time something might happen—he knew not what—or some light be vouchsafed to him which would show him a way out of his difficulties.

These, or something like these, were the thoughts that were floating hazily in his mind, when in the distance he spied Tom Bristow striding along at his usual energetic rate. The Squire being still very lame, wisely captured a passing butcher boy, and, with the promise of sixpence, bade him hurry after Tom, and not come back without him.

"You must come back with me to Pincote," he said, when the astonished Tom had been duly captured. "I'll take no refusal. I've got a fit of mopes, and if you don't come and help to keep Jenny and me alive this evening, I'll never speak to you again as long as I live." So saying, the Squire linked his arm in Tom's, and turned his face towards Pincote; and nothing loath was Tom to go with him.

"I've done a fine thing this afternoon," said Mr. Culpepper, as they drove along in the basket-carriage, which had been waiting for him at the hotel. "I've broken off Jenny's engagement with Edward Cope."

Tom's heart gave a great bound. "Pardon me, sir, for saying so," he said as calmly as he could, "but I never thought that Mr. Cope was in any way worthy of Miss Culpepper."

"You are right, boy. He was not worthy of her."

"From the first time of seeing them together, I felt how entirely unfitted was Mr. Cope to appreciate Miss Culpepper's manifold charms of heart and mind. A marriage between two such people would have been a most incongruous one."

"Thank Heaven! it's broken now and for ever."

"I've broken off your engagement to Edward Cope," whispered the Squire to Jane in the hall, as he kissed her. "Are you glad or sorry, dear?"

"Glad—very, very glad, papa," she whispered back as she rained a score of kisses on his face. Then she began to cry, and with that she

ran away to her own room till she could recover herself.

"Women are queer cattle," said the Squire, turning to Tom, "and I'll be hanged if I can ever make them out."

"From Miss Culpepper's manner, sir," said Tom, gravely, "I should judge that you had told her something that pleased her very much indeed."

"Then what did she begin snivelling for?" said the Squire, gruffly.

"Why not tell him everything?" said the Squire to himself, as he and Tom sat down in the drawing-room. "He knows a good deal already,—why not tell him more? I know he can do nothing towards helping me to raise five thousand pounds, but it will do me good to talk to him. I must talk to somebody—and I feel sure my secret is quite safe with him. I'll tell him while Jenny's out of the room."

The Squire coughed and hemmed, and poked the fire violently before he could find a word to say. "Bristow," he burst out at last, "I want to raise five thousand five hundred pounds in five days from now, and as I'm rather a bad hand at borrowing, I thought that you could, maybe, give me a hint as to how it could best be done. Cope would have advanced it for me in a moment, only that he happens to be rather short of funds just now, and I don't want to trouble any of my other friends if it can anyhow be managed without." He began to hum the air of an old drinking-song, and poked the fire again. "Capital coals these," he added. "And I got 'em cheap, too. The market went up three shillings a ton the very day after these were sent in."

"Five thousand five hundred pounds is rather a large amount, sir," said Tom, slowly.

"Of course it's a large amount," said the Squire, testily. "If it were only a paltry hundred or two I wouldn't trouble anybody. But never mind, Bristow—never mind. I didn't suppose that you could help me when I mentioned it; and, after all, it's a matter of very little consequence whether I raise the money or not."

"I can only suggest one way, sir, by which the money could be raised in so short a time."

"Eh!" said the Squire, turning suddenly on him, and dropping the poker noisily in the grate. "You don't mean to say that you can see how it's to be done!"

"I think I do, sir. Do you know the piece of ground called Prior's Croft?"

"Very well indeed. It belongs to Duckworth, the publican."

"Between you and me, sir, Duckworth's hard up, and would be glad to sell the Croft if he could do it quietly and without its becoming generally known that he is short of money."

"Well?" said the Squire, a little impatiently. He could not understand what Tom was driving at.

"I dare engage to say, sir, that you could have the Croft for two thousand pounds, cash down."

"Confound it, man, what an idiot you must be!" said the Squire fiercely, bringing his fist down on the table with a tremendous bang. "Didn't I tell you that I wanted to borrow money, and not to spend it? In fact, as you know quite well, I've got none to spend."

"Precisely so," said Tom, coolly. "And that is the point to which I am coming, if you will hear me out."

The Squire's only answer was to glare at him, as if in doubt whether he had not taken leave of his senses.

"As I said before, sir, Duckworth will take two thousand pounds for the Croft, cash down. Now I, sir, will engage to raise two thousand pounds for you by to-morrow, at noon, with which to buy the piece of ground in question. The purchase can be effected, and the necessary deeds made out and completed, by ten o'clock the following morning. If you will entrust those deeds into my possession, I will guarantee to effect a mortgage for six thousand pounds, in your name, on the Croft."

If the Squire had looked suspicious with regard to Tom's sanity before, he now seemed to have no doubt whatever on the point. He quietly took up the poker again, as if he were afraid that Tom might spring at him unexpectedly.

"So you could lend me two thousand pounds could you?" said the Squire drily.

"I did not say that, sir. I said that I could raise two thousand pounds for you, which is a very different matter from lending it out of my own pocket."

"Humph! And who, sir, do you think would be such a consummate ass as to advance six thousand pounds on a plot of ground that had just been bought for two thousand?"

"Strange as such a transaction may seem to you, sir, I give you my word of honour that I should find no difficulty in carrying it out. Have I your permission to do so?"

"I suppose that the two thousand raised by you would have to be repaid out of the six thousand raised by mortgage, leaving me with a balance of four thousand in hand?" said the Squire, without heeding Tom's question, a smile of incredulity playing round his mouth.

"No, sir," answered Tom. "The two thousand pounds could remain on interest at five per cent. for whatever term might suit your convenience. Again, sir, I ask, have I your permission to negotiate the transaction for you?"

Mr. Culpepper gazed steadily for a moment or two into Tom's clear, cold eyes. There were no symptoms of insanity visible there, at any rate. "And do you mean to tell me in sober seriousness," he said, "that you can raise this money in the way you speak of?"

"In sober seriousness, I mean to tell you that I can. Try me."

"I will try you," answered the Squire, impulsively. "I will try you, boy. You are a strange fellow, and I begin to think that there's more in you than I ever thought there was. But here comes Jenny. Not a word more just now."

CHAPTER II.

IN THE SYCAMORE WALK.

The Park Newton clocks, with more or less unanimity as to time, had just struck ten. It was a February night, clear and frosty, and Lionel Dering sat in his dressing-room in slippered ease, musing by firelight. He had turned out the lamp on purpose; it was too garish for his mood to-night. He was back again in thought at Gatehouse Farm. Again he saw the gray old cottage, with its moss-grown eaves—the cottage that was so ugly outside, but so cosy within. Again he saw the long low sandhills, where they stretched themselves out to meet the horizon, and, in fancy, heard again the low, monotonous plash of the waves, whose melancholy music, heard by day and night, had at one time been as familiar to him as the sound of his own voice. What a quiet, happy time that seemed as he now looked back to it—a time of soft shadows and mild sunshine, with a pensive charm that was all its own, and that was lost for ever in the hour which told him that he was a rich man! Riches! What had riches done for him? He groaned in spirit as he asked himself the question. He could have been happy with Edith in a garret—how happy none but himself could have told—had fortune compelled him to earn her bread and his own by the sweat of his strong right arm.

His musings were interrupted by a knock at the door. "Come in," he called out mechanically; and in there came, almost without, a sound, Dobbs, body-servant to Kester St. George.

"Oh, Dobbs, is that you?" said Lionel, a little wearily, as he turned his head and saw who it was.

"Yes, sir, I have made bold to intrude upon you for a few seconds," said Dobbs, with the utmost deference, as he slowly advanced into the room, rubbing the long lean fingers of one hand softly with the palm of the other. "My master has not yet got back from Duxley, and there's nobody about just now."

"Quite right, Dobbs," said Lionel. "Anything fresh to report?"

"Nothing particularly fresh, sir, but I thought that you might perhaps like to see me."

"Very considerate of you, Dobbs, but I am not aware that I have anything of consequence to say to you to-night."

"Thank you, sir," said Dobbs, with a faint smile and an extra rub of his fingers. "Master's still very queer, sir. No appetite worth speaking about. Obligated to screw himself up with brandy in a morning before he can finish his toilet. Mutters and moans a good deal in his sleep, sir."

"Mutters in his sleep, does he?" said Lionel. "Have you any idea, Dobbs, what it is that he talks about?"

"I've tried my best to ascertain, sir, but without much success. I have listened and listened for hours, and very cold work it is, sir; but there's never more than a word now and a word then that one can make out. Nothing connected—nothing worth recollecting."

"Does Mr. St. George still walk in his sleep?"

"He does, sir, but not very often—not more than two or three times a month."

"Keep your eyes open, Dobbs, and the very next time your master walks in his sleep come to me at once—never mind what hour it may be—and tell me."

"I won't fail to do so, sir."

"In these sleep-walking rambles does Mr. St. George always confine himself to the house, or does he ever venture out into the park or grounds?"

"He generally goes out of doors, sir, at such times. Three times out of four he goes as far as the Wizard's Fountain, in the Sycamore

Walk, stops there for a minute or two, and then walks back home. I have watched him several times."

"The Wizard's Fountain, in the Sycamore Walk! What should take him there?"

"Then you know the place, sir?"

"I know it well."

"Can't say what fancy takes him there, sir. Perhaps he doesn't know hisself."

"In any case, let me know when he next walks in his sleep. I have no further instructions for you to-night, Dobbs."

"Thank you, sir. I have the honour to wish you a very good night, sir."

"Good-night, Dobbs. Keep your eyes open, and report everything to me."

"Yes, sir, yes. You may trust me for doing that, sir." And Dobbs the obsequious bowed himself out.

In his cousin's valet Lionel had found an instrument ready to his hand, but it was not till after long hesitation and doubt that he made up his mind to avail himself of it. The necessities of the case at length decided him to do so. No one appreciated the value of a bribe better than Dobbs, or worked harder or more conscientiously to deserve one. There was a crooked element in his character which made whatever money he might earn by indirect means, or by tortuous working, seem far sweeter to him than the honest wages of everyday life. Kester St. George was not the kind of man ever to try to attach his inferiors to himself by any tie of gratitude or kindness. At different times and in various ways he suffered for this indifference, although the present could hardly be considered as a case in point, seeing that it was not in the nature of Dobbs to resist a bribe in whatever shape it might offer itself, and that gratitude was one of those virtues which had altogether been omitted from his composition.

Late one afternoon, a few days after the interview between Lionel and Dobbs, Kester St. George had his horse brought round, and rode out unattended, and without leaving word in what direction he was going, or at what hour he might be expected back. The day was dull and lowering, with fitful puffs of wind, that blew first from one point and then from another, and seemed the forerunners of a coming storm. Buried in his own thoughts, Kester paid no heed to the weather, but rode quickly forward till several miles of country had been crossed. By-and-by he diverged from the main road, and turned his horse's head into a tortuous and muddy lane, which, after half an hour's bad travelling, landed him on the verge of a wide stretch of brown treeless moor, than which no place could well have looked more desolate and cheerless under the gray monotony of the darkening February afternoon. Kester halted for awhile at the end of the lane to give his horse breathing time. Far as the eye could see, looking forward from the point where he was standing, all was bare and treeless, without one single sign of habitation or life.

"Whatever else may be changed, either with me or the world," he muttered, "the old moor remains just as it was the first day that I can remember it. It was horrible to me at first, but I learned to like it—to love it even, before I left it; and I love it now—to-day—with all its dreariness and monotony. It is like the face of an old friend. You may go away for twenty years, and when you come back you know that you will find on it just the same look that it wore when you went away. Not that I have ever cared to cultivate such friendships," he added, half regretfully. "Well, the next best thing to having a good friend is to have a good enemy, and I can thank heaven for granting me several such."

He touched his horse with the spur, and rode slowly forward, taking a narrow bridle path that led in an oblique direction across the moor. "This ought to be the road if my memory serves me aright," he muttered, "but they are all so much alike, and intersect each other so frequently, that it's far more easy to lose one's way than to know where one is."

"I suppose I shall have the rough side of Mother Mim's tongue when I do find her," he went on. "I've neglected her shamefully, without a doubt. But such ties as the one between her and me become tiresome in the long run. She ought to have died off long ago, but she's as tough as leather. Poor devils in this part of the country, that haven't a penny to bless themselves with, think nothing of living till they're a hundred. Is it a superfluity of ozone, or a want of brains, that keeps them alive so long?"

He rode steadily forward till he had nearly crossed one angle of the moor. At length, but not without some difficulty, he found the place he had come in search of. It was a rudely-built hut—cottage it could hardly be called—composed of mud, and turf, and great boulders all unhewn. Its roof of coarsest thatch was frayed and worn with the wind and rain of many winters. Its solitary door of old planks, roughly nailed together, opened full on to the moor.

At the back was a patch of garden-ground, which was supposed to grow potatoes in the season, but which had never yet been known to grow any that were fit to eat. Mr. St. George looked round with a sneer as he dismounted.

"And it was in this wretched den that I spent the first eight years of my existence!" he muttered. "And the woman whom this place calls its mistress was the first being whom I learned to love! And, faith, I'm rather doubtful whether I've ever loved anybody half so well since."

Putting his horse's bridle over a convenient hook, and dispensing with the ceremony of knocking, Kester St. George lifted the latch, pushed open the door, stooped his head, and went in. Inside the hut everything was in semi-darkness, and Kester stood for a minute with the door in his hand, striving to make out the objects before him.

"Come in and shut the door: I expected you," said a hollow voice from one corner of the room; and the one room, such as it was, comprised the whole hut.

"Is that you, Mother Mim?" asked Kester.

"Ay—who else should it be?" answered the voice. "But come in and shut the door. That cold wind gives me the shivers."

Kester did as he was told, and then made his way to a wretched pallet at the other end of the hut. Of furniture there was hardly any, and the aspect of the whole place was miserable in the extreme. Over the ashes of a wood fire crouched a girl of sixteen, ragged and unkempt, who stared at him with black, glittering eyes as he passed her. Next moment he was standing by the side of a ragged pallet, on which lay the figure of a woman who looked ill almost unto death.

"Why, mother, whatever has been the matter with you?" asked Kester. "A little bit out of sorts, eh? But you'll soon be all right again now."

"Yes, I shall soon be all right now—soon be quite well," answered the woman grimly. "A black box and six feet of earth cure everything."

"You mustn't talk in that way, mother," said Kester, as he sat down on the only chair in the place, and took one of the woman's lean, hot hands in his. "You will live to plague us for many a year to come."

"Kester St. George, this is the last time you and I will meet in this world."

"I hope not, with all my heart," said Kester, feelingly.

"I know what I know, and I know that what I say is true," answered Mother Mim. "You would not have come now if I had not worked a spell strong enough to bring you here even against your will. I worked it four nights ago, at midnight, when that young viper there"—pointing a finger at the girl, who was still cowering over the ashes—"was fast asleep, and there were no eyes to see but those of the cold stars. Ah! but it was horrible! and if it had not been that I felt I must see you before I died, I could never have gone through with it." She paused for a moment, as though overcome by some dreadful recollection. "Then, when it was over, I crept back to bed, and waited quietly, knowing that now you could not choose but come."

"I ought to have come and seen you long ago—I know it—I feel it," said Kester. "But let bygones be bygones, and I give you my solemn promise never to neglect you again. I am rich now, mother, and you shall never want for anything as long as you live."

"Too late—too late!" sighed the woman. "Yes, you're rich now, rich enough to bury me, and that's all I ask you to do."

"Don't talk like that, mother," said Kester.

"If you had only come to see me!" said the woman. "That was all I wanted. Just to see your face, and squeeze your hand, and have you to talk to me for a little while. I wanted none of your money—no, not a single shilling of it. It was only you I wanted."

Kester began to feel slightly bored. He squeezed Mother Mim's hand, and then dropped it, but he did not speak.

"But you didn't come," moaned the woman, "and you wouldn't have come now if I hadn't worked a charm to bring you."

"There you wrong me," said Kester, decisively. "Your charm, or spell, or whatever it may have been, had no effect in bringing me here. I came of my own free will."

"Self-conceited, as you always were and always will be," muttered the woman. Then, half raising herself in bed, and addressing the girl, she cried: "Nell, you hussy, just you hook it for a quarter of an hour. The gent and I have something to talk about."

The girl rose sullenly, went slowly out, and banged the door behind her.

Kester wondered what was coming next. He had dropped the woman's hand, but she now held it out for him to take again. He took it, and she pressed his hand passionately to her lips three or four times.

"If the great secret of my life is to be told at all on this side the grave, the time to tell it is now come. I always thought to die without revealing it, but somehow of late everything has seemed different to me, and I feel now as if I couldn't die easy without telling you." She paused for a minute, exhausted. There was some

brandy on the chimney-piece, and Kester gave her a little. Again she took his hand and kissed it passionately.

"You will, perhaps, curse me for what I am about to tell you," she went on, "but whether you do so or not, so may Heaven help me if it is anything more than the simple truth! Kester St. George, you have no right to the name you bear—to the name the world knows you by!"

Kester was so startled that for a moment or two he sat like one suddenly stricken dumb. "Go on," he said at last. "There's more to follow. I like boldness in lying as in everything else."

"Again I swear that I am telling you no more than the solemn truth."

"If I am not Kester St. George," he said with a sneer, "perhaps you will kindly inform me who I really am."

"You are my son!"

He flung the woman's hand savagely from him, and sprang to his feet with an oath. "Your son!" he said. "Ha! ha! ha! Your son, indeed! Since when have your senses quite left you, Mother Mim? A dark cell in Bedlam and a strait waistcoat would be your best physic."

"I am rightly punished," moaned the woman—"rightly punished. I ought to have told you years ago—ay—before you ever grew to be a man. But I loved you so, and had such pride in you, that I couldn't bear the thought of telling you, and it's only now when I'm on my deathbed that the secret forces itself from me. But it will go no farther, never you fear that. No living soul but you will ever hear it from my lips; and you have only got to keep your own lips tightly shut, and you will live and die as Kester St. George."

She sank back with the exhaustion of speaking. Mechanically, and almost without knowing what he was doing, Kester again gave her a little brandy. Then he sat down; and Mother Mim, finding his hand close by, took possession of it again. He shuddered slightly, but did not withdraw it.

Although Mother Mim had advanced no proofs in support of the strange story she had just told him, there was something in her tone which carried conviction to his inmost heart.

"I must know more of this," he said, after a little while, speaking almost in a whisper.

"How well I remember everything about it! It seems only like yesterday that it all happened," sighed the woman. "You—my own child, and he—the other one that was sent to me to nurse, were born within a few hours of one another. His father broke a blood-vessel about six weeks after the child was brought to me. The mother went with her husband to Italy to take care of him, and the child was left with me. A week or two afterwards he was taken suddenly ill, and died. Then the devil tempted me to put my own boy into the place of the lost heir. When Mrs. St. George came back from Italy she came to see her child, and you were shown to her as that child. She accepted you without a moment's suspicion. They let you stay with me till you were eight years old, and then they took you away and sent you to school. My husband and my sister were the only two beside myself who knew what had been done, and they both died years ago without saying a word. I shall join them in a few days, and then you alone will be the keeper of the secret. With you it will die, and on your tombstone they will write: 'Here lies the body of Kester St. George.'"

She had told her story with great difficulty, and with frequent interruptions to gather strength and breath to finish it. She now lay back, utterly exhausted. Her eyes closed, her hand relaxed its hold on Kester's, her jaw dropped slightly, the thin white face grew thinner and whiter: it seemed as if Death, passing that way, had looked in unexpectedly, and had beckoned her to go with him. Kester rose quickly, and struck a match and lighted a fragment of candle that he found on the chimney-piece. His next impulse was to try and revive her with a little brandy, but he paused with the glass in his hand. Why try to revive her? Would it not be better for him, for her, for every one, if she were really dead? If such were the case, it would do away with all fear of her strange secret being ever

divulged to any one else. Yes—in every way her death would be a welcome release.

It was not without a tremor, it was not without a faster beating of the heart, that Kester took the bit of cracked looking-glass from the wall and held it to the woman's lips. His very life seemed to stand still for a moment or two while he waited for the result. It came. The glass clouded faintly. The woman was not dead. With a muttered curse Kester dashed the glass across the floor and put back the candle on the chimney-piece. Then he took up his hat. Where was the use of staying longer? She could tell him nothing more when she should have come to her senses than she had told him already: nothing, that is, of any consequence; and as for details, he did not want them—at least, not now. What he had been told already held food enough for thought for some time to come. He paused for a moment before going out. Was it really possible—was it really credible, that that haggard, sharp-featured woman was his mother?—that his father had been a coarse, common labouring man, a mere hedger and ditcher, who had lived and died in that mean hut, and that he himself, instead of being the Kester St. George he had always believed himself to be, was no other than the son of those two—the boy whose supposed death he remembered to have heard about when little more than a mere child?

Fiercely and savagely he told himself again and again that such a thing could not be—that what Mother Mim had told him was nothing more than a pack of devil's lies—the invention of a brain weakened and distorted by illness and the clouds of coming death. It was high time to go. He put five sovereigns on the chimney-piece, went softly out, and shut the door behind him. The girl was sitting on the low mud-wall near the door, with the skirt of her dress drawn over her head as some protection from the bitter wind. Her black, glittering eyes took him in from head to foot as he walked up to her. "Go inside at once. She has fainted," said Kester. The girl nodded and went. Then Kester mounted his horse and rode slowly homeward through the chilly twilight. Bitterest thoughts held him as with a vice. When he came within sight of the chimneys of Park Newton, he gave

a sigh of relief, and put spurs to his horse. "That is mine, and no power on earth shall take it from me," he muttered. "That and the money that comes with it. I am Kester St. George. Let those disprove who can!"

A few nights later, as Lionel Dering was sitting in his dressing-room, smoking a last cigar before turning in, there came three low, distinct taps at the door, which he recognized as the peculiar signal of Dobbs. It was nearly an hour past midnight, and in that early household every one had been long abed, or, at least, had retired long ago to their own rooms.

Lionel opened the door, and Dobbs slid softly in. Such visits were by no means infrequent, but they were usually paid at a somewhat earlier hour than on the present occasion.

"Come in, Dobbs," said Lionel. "You are later to-night than usual."

"Yes, sir, I am, and I must ask you to pardon me for intruding at such an hour; but, if you remember, sir, you told me, a little while ago, that I was to let you know without fail the very next time my master took to walking in his sleep."

"Quite right, Dobbs. I am glad that you have not forgotten my instructions."

"Well, sir, Mr. St. George left his rooms, a few minutes ago, fast asleep."

"In which direction did he go?"

"He went down the side staircase, and through the conservatory, and let himself out through the little glass door into the garden."

"And then which way did he go?"

"I did not follow him any farther, but ran at once to tell you."

"Have you any idea as to what direction he would be most likely to take?"

"There is little doubt, sir, but that he has gone towards the Wizard's Fountain, in the Sycamore Walk. Three times already, that is the place to which he has gone."

"We must follow him, Dobbs."

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